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DR. S.M. YUSUF
Karachi University

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DR. S.M. YUSUF, M.A., PH.D.
Karachi University

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SOME ASPECTS OF ISLAMIC CULTURE

What is 'Culture'?

ONE of the few words freely bandied about without an honest attempt to realise their import is *Culture*. Many would simply raise their eyebrows if they were asked to define and explain what they understood by the word. But those who avoid facing such a poser would often betray by their prides and prejudices the utter confusion in their mind between *culture* and 'the externals of *civilisation*.' The point was well brought out in the words of a wit who, in exasperation at Kemal Ataturk's imposition of the western head-gear on the Turks, remarked that what really mattered was not the gear but the head. Culture is essentially an attribute of the mind; it is the sum total of man's outlook on the universe and his own place in it, his views about the goal of life, his conceptions of happiness and sorrow, his bearing in adversity and in prosperity, and his attitude towards the problems of everyday life. It is in the same vein that Iqbal gives the characteristic of a Muslim as 'a smile on the lips at the time of death'; it has very little to do with the turban or the fez or the western head-gear to which Ataturk took such a fancy. These attitudes and modes of behaviour spring from the realisation of certain fundamental values, the realisation, of course, coming through an effort of the intellect. As soon as this realisation is clear beyond all doubt and firm enough to bear the shock of any counter-force, it is called a 'conviction' and a 'faith.' It follows that faith springing from a dogma and resting on no effort of

the intellect is only an insult to the dignity of man, merely a form of sorcery and witchcraft.[1] As the supreme test of a fundamental value is that it should be universal and equally applicable to all people in all climes and for all times,[2] all 'religions' calling for allegiance to local gods and deities cease to deserve our attention. Nationalism, which has only lately been realised to be a form of 'collective selfishness,' a 'doctrine of mutual hatred,' and at best an allegiance to *peoples* and not to *values*, is also beyond our purview. At the same time all the world ideologies—even the so-called 'irreligious ideologies' such as Communism in our own day—have a title to be treated as on a par with 'religion.' It is a mere ruse (practised only in countries where religion is still predominant and the means of suppressing it by force have not yet been captured) to concentrate on the economic system of Marx; the fundamental values, the 'anti-metaphysical metaphysics,' on which the super-structure is built have to be considered, accepted, or rejected. Thus if the above assertion with regard to culture and its mainspring be conceded, it will be found that geography, race, colour, language, or any other regional, as opposed to universal, factor has no place in its essential make-up. At least such is the view taken by Islam; it insists only on the cultivation of certain fundamental values in the minds of its followers and the exhibition of those values in their character and daily life, the rest being declared to be merely unimportant and left to be determined according to convenience, taste, and free choice. The externals of civilisation are only matters of historical growth, so to say, and must change and develop according to the development of sciences and arts and progressive change in the material circumstances of life.

For instance, in regard to dress Islam only lays down the simple general directive that it should be such as to cover the body of a man from the navel to the knees; in the case of a woman it should cover the whole of her body so as to reveal only the face (covering of the face is

not a religious injunction but merely a custom in some countries) and the palms of the two hands, provided also that it should not be so close fitting as to invite attention unduly to the curves of the body. This is, of course, in full conformity with the demands of the Islamic virtue of modesty and it actually served the Muslims very well in the evolution of a variety of forms—some majestic and cumbersome, others light, comfortable and graceful—at different times and in different countries. All of these forms were, and are, equally Islamic and the spirit of change, evolution, and eager development of skill is writ large on them. Further, changes in taste or adaptations to the requirements of a machine age are not tabooed and a mere steadfast reverence for the old and the primitive is unthinkable. Only a parallel to low necks and short skirts is unlawful.

Similar is the case with the clothing for thought, i.e. language. A Muslim is only anxious to transmit Islamic thought and teach the Islamic way of life to his posterity and to make the same known to and understood by others; he would only be a fool who would not adopt the easiest vehicle for that. Suffice it to say that to a Muslim no language is profane; actually many of the languages which are to-day treated as Islamic came to be so only after the adoption of Islam by those who spoke them. But languages, like Rome, are not built and developed in a day and to order; whether a language is actually the repository of Islamic thought or not depends not on the fiat of an individual or a body of individuals but on the patient and genuine efforts of gifted writers, philosophers and poets spread over generations, rather centuries. Hence, a Muslim's attachment to a language which is actually so is pardonable and has every claim on the tolerance of others.

There is a similar freedom in regard to architecture too. A Muslim can pray under the canopy of the sky or under a roof built in any style. As a matter of fact, the second Caliph, 'Umar, when he went to take over the city of Jerusalem, would not mind praying inside a

church; he did not do so only for fear lest the later Muslims take it as a precedent and insist on forcing entry into that church, thus infringing upon the rights of the Christians. This freedom proved a valuable aid to originality. The early Muslims borrowed frankly and with an air of confidence from the Romans and from others until they evolved a variety of forms and styles which reached their culmination in Spain in the west and in India in the east and which are justly acknowledged to be characteristically their own. A Muslim has only appreciation for them, not veneration; they are specimens of workmanship, not shrines. Honestly and dispassionately he would himself assert that mausoleums have no place in Islam and that the employment of gold and jewels in buildings (it is the worse if the building were a mosque) is not sanctioned by Islam. He would resent a criticism of them only when he has reason to suspect that it is directed against his very political or communal existence in the past or in the present.

As for race or colour, Islam would simply take no note of them.

It must, however, be made clear that language, dress, and externals like them do assume a significance when they are adopted, pretended, or favoured from an inward sense of inferiority complex and an ostensible desire to curry favour with those (not necessarily 'white') who may happen to be in political ascendancy with the power to distribute the loaves and crumbs of offices and what not. The Prophet of Islam did visualise such a phase in the life of a people when he declared: 'Whoever strains himself to look like other people, he must be regarded as one of them (i.e. a deserter to his own community).' But this has another aspect too which is often overlooked. It is the same sense of inferiority complex which not infrequently finds expression in fearful sensitiveness and a ceremonious, ostentatious display of onself, not to mention unseemly *braggadocio*. It very soon hardens into prejudice, invariably unreasonable, and bars the way to free exchange of skill

and the common endeavour of mankind towards ever-increasing amenities and comforts of life. In India, for example, the ways of Mr. Gandhi let loose strange forces, many of which continue to be an enigma to great historians[3] in spite of his world-wide fame and influence among the masses as well as among the intellectuals. During the days when the Non-Co-operation Movement was at its height people would disdainfully forgo the small conveniences of spoons and plates, push the chairs aside and squat on the floor, and shun the comfort and decency of shoes and full covering for the body, though they did not mind the use of microphones to shout from public platforms and motor cars and railway trains to carry their message of archaism from place to place. As against this, Islam would assimilate boldly, frankly and thoughtfully all progress in arts, science, industry and technology in all parts of the world and would allow no false sense of pride or contentment to disdain the benefits and conveniences resulting from them. At the advent of Islam the Arabs had few traces of civilisation in their desert land; they learned assiduously and with genuine appreciation and gratitude from other peoples—from those who accepted Islam and those who did not, not excluding even those who remained opposed to Islam. At no time in their long history did they experience the drag of a tendency to be arrogantly retrogressive or static, their ambition being always to be able to make a worthy contribution on their own behalf to the general advancement of mankind in science and civilisation. The success achieved by them was by no means unimportant; suffice it to say that, according to George Sarton, almost the whole of three or four centuries of the medieval age deserve to be called the glorious age of Islam in the history of science. In short, there is no question of sublimating any antiquated means of production or the externals of civilisation that went with them; they must be left where the march of science and arts has left them. Any attempt to bolster them up with sentiment or glorification is retrogressive and bound

to fail in the end. Science and civilisation are cumulative and do not belong to any particular individual or nation. All discoveries and inventions, including the guarded secret of atomic energy, are bound to become the common property of mankind in the course of time as much as the discovery of fire by the primitive man. With the exception, of course, of occasional set-backs, succeeding generations of mankind as a whole simply cannot afford to be less advanced in civilisation, in the amenities and comforts of life, than the preceding ones.

Culture, on the other hand, consists in *outlook* on the world and its riches; improvements in the quality and quantity of those riches do not affect or change it. Moreover, culture is not cumulative; it has to be won afresh by every succeeding generation through will and conscious effort. It does not automatically and inevitably move forward with the inevitable progress in civilisation. Hence, superior cultures with a comparatively less advanced civilisation and inferior cultures with a comparatively more advanced civilisation are not only possibilities but actualities of ancient as well as modern history. Rather it is the lag between culture and civilisation, between moral outlook and material achievements, which is responsible for the crises and catastrophes of the world, particularly of the contemporary world.

I. The Formula of Islam

(*a*) *Negation.* The formula of Islam is: 'There is no god but Allah.' The first part of it ('There is no god') is a negation while the second part ('but Allah') is an affirmation. The negation clears the ground for the affirmation. Let us assess the significance of the negation first. As soon as a child develops the necessary faculties, he sets about observing the natural phenomena around him—the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the pebbles, the shells, the animals, the snails, and the ants—all attract his attention. In 'play'—which is

nothing but an enjoyable trial and experimentation with nature—the child gets his first notions of the properties of the various objects and the laws that govern them. In the next stage he attempts to relate his knowledge of nature to the needs of his own existence. It is in the course of this attempt that he exhibits fears, obsessions, nightmares, animations and devotions, many of which are merely the result of his under-estimating his own powers and faculties—actual as well as potential. In other words, the child faces an inescapable fundamental problem as to his own place in the universe. In the same way the child has also to find out the correct level of adjustment of his position first in 'home' and then ultimately in the society of mankind as a whole. Here in this sphere too the child has to pass through many false prides, prejudices and inhibitions before he can attain to some degree of adjustment, which may bring him as sense of security in his surroundings. In both the cases, however, the child has to put up a very hard struggle, which very often ends in failure or just partial success. Modern psychology has also laid bare the fact that many of us in mature age do not actually outgrow the fears and inhibitions of our childhood. The story of the child is the story of the man. In his early attempts to find out the 'sources of good and evil' (the word 'god' in the Islamic formula should be treated as such) for himself, he often allowed himself to be overawed by high mountain peaks, incorruptible stars, sources of such essentials as light and water, mainstays of his principal avocations such as agriculture, or even his own subjective impressions of inscrutability translated or transmuted by his own imagination into so many material figures set up in terms of this material world. This attitude of diffidence, rather slavery to nature, straightaway opens the way to the slavery of man to man. The man who has failed to 'realise' his own powers *vis-a-vis* nature would be found to be all-readiness to surrender and abdicate them *vis-a-vis* his own fellow human beings. Thus the necessary

adjuncts of 'idolatry' (which is nothing but the attitude of mind referred to above; it may exist with or even without an idol as it does in the case of some degenerate Muslims of to-day) are a priesthood, an ever-growing paraphernalia of rituals, and a caste-ridden society—all these factors contributing to the cumulative result, which is the deadening of a sense of moral responsibility in man.

Buddhism, to give it due precedence, marks the first organised and effective protest on the part of 'enlightened' intellect against a state of affairs such as depicted above, hallowed by tradition and tenaciously maintained by vested interests in India. The main targets of Buddhism loom so large as to force themselves at once upon the attention of just an ordinary student. The almost exclusive[4] emphasis on empirical knowledge, the denial of all source of good and evil in any of the objects of this world, the war upon omens, auguries and superstitions of all kinds, the non-recognition of any priesthood,[5] the almost complete absence of ritual, the condemnation of caste, and the assiduous and methodic inculcation of a keen sense of moral responsibility—all this antithesis of 'idolatry' stems from the same attitude of mind which the Islamic formula epitomises in the words 'There is no god.' As I was going through the *Sigalowada Sutta* or the *Samma-paribbajaniya Sutta*, for instance, I was deeply struck by the fact that it breathed the same anti-idolatrous spirit which is the sheet-anchor of the dignity of man and which is so prominently associated with Islam, though seldom properly understood and appreciated for its real worth. Only if it were examined dispassionately, this aspect of the ideology of a Muslim will not be found to be in any way unreasonable, quaint, or without a parallel in the history of man's thought. As a matter of fact, Islam proudly asserts that the fundamental truths which it revives, consolidates, and systematises are so reasonable that they must have occurred to the sages, known and unknown, of all the countries at different times.

Apart from the manifestations of the 'negation' in social organisation noted above, there is yet another surer test which competent authorities have applied to the credit of Buddhism and Islam alike. It will be realised that the real significance of the 'negation' lies in that it provides man with the only correct approach to nature indispensable for scientific progress. Here is George Sarton speaking of 'the most scientific of all religions,' viz. *Pure Buddhism* :

'Early Buddhism was based essentially not on any faith, but on knowledge and love—on knowledge first. The agnosticism, rigorous logic, hatred of superstition and self-delusion, respect for reason and truth, which characterised it, would have provided ideal conditions for the development of scientific thought, had they not been accompanied—and, so to say, neutralised—by an almost complete lack of scientific curiosity. The Buddha's purpose was primarily philosophical, ethical, but his thought was distinctly of a scientific nature, and the historian of science should give him a place of honour.'[6]

The Muslims were more fortunate indeed in that they pursued science whole-heartedly and in the most favourable circumstances until they came to be the leading representatives of it for full three or four centuries and history has not forgotten that it were they who lit the spark of modern science in a Europe enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. This is all the more remarkable in that they did not need a break with religion for such an achievement; rather, the stimulus came from religion itself. Thus, the negation is a basic cultural attitude of the first-rate importance and every student has to adopt it before he enters a scientific laboratory, no matter whether he acknowledges it consciously and frankly in so many words or not.

Lastly, we have to remember the attack of Engels on religion. 'All religion,' says he in *Anti-Duhring*, 'is

nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life; a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces.' The charge is quite justified and represents a historical truth, provided it is not directed against 'all religion.' There have been religions which have revolted against the kind of religion which the protagonist of irreligion had in mind. It is notable that Communist literature studiously ignores Islam. Nevertheless, a Muslim is one to whom this material universe with all its natural forces and moral temptations has surrendered; to allow any terrestrial forces to assume the form of supernatural forces is the real idolatry which is rightly regarded as an anathema to Islam.

(*b*) *Affirmation.* This is the point where Buddhism and Islam part company with each other. Both are intensely concerned with morality but differ radically in regard to the basis of morality. The idea of theism or even monotheism was not unknown in Indian philosophy in which Gautama was disciplined; he, however, must have known too well that in the hands of the Brahmans it did not produce the moral results that he had at heart, rather it provided a lever to the various kinds of corruption which were rampant in the society of the day. I follow those scholars who assert that he did not expressly deny a Creator; his way seems to be just to hush up or parry the question. He successfully contrived to by-pass it by snatching a weapon from the hands of his opponents, remoulding it to his own purpose, and hurling it against them. According to Islamic thought, a disbelief in the Creator leaves one in a sort of moral vacuum; the Buddha filled the vacuum by resorting to one of the few mysteries in the otherwise simple practical path of virtue. The Buddhist doctrine of transmigration (albeit without a soul) is indeed a mystery, at least for those who look at it from outside, but, it must be acknowledged in fairness, a morally useful one as compared with those in which Brahmanism

abounded.

Islam proceeds forward with its argument from nature. It arrives at a basis for morality by providing a strictly well-defined and unequivocal answer to a query which comes natural to the mind, the intellect, the commonsense of man and which man has at times only suppressed by a conscious and deliberate effort. The query as to 'who created the world,' if not invariably common, has been a recurring one in the history of man's religious thought in general. Islam evokes and strengthens the question, brings it to the fore, almost tortures the *mind* of man with it, and seizes upon the answer to extend full and effective control over the entire gamut of man's life on earth. Islam, so to say, presupposes the inevitable occurrence of this question to everyone who has got his senses and his mind and is not averse to exercising them; in a way, it may even be said to belong to the realm of intuition,[7] and there is no reason why this intuition should *prima facie* be distrusted.

We can now proceed to a statement of the key argument of Islam:

> Look at the world, not forgetting your own self; note that everything is impermanent[8] and ever-changing, *the changes manifesting a system and a design.* Are these not clear signs of a Self-Existent, Eternal Creator—Designer and Sustainer—of the cosmos that the world is?

Compare with it the key argument of Buddhism:

> Look at the world: everything is impermanent and ever-changing. Does it not occasion *dukh* for man from birth to death? Every attempt to satisfy one's longings and desires brings more and more misery in its trail. Let us, therefore, extinguish longing and desire so that we may attain to peace.

Thus the stepping stones are: (*a*) In the case of Islam: World—Creator—Will of God—Obedience to

Him. (The latter two points will be discussed subsequently.) (*b*) In the case of Buddhism: World—*Dukh*—Desires—Extinction of Desires—Peace.

Having made a common start with the observation of impermanence and change, in the material universe, which is reflected in the 'negation,' Buddhism just takes the world as it is and at once becomes engrossed in the misery of man[9] and the search for a remedy thereof. This strengthens the impression than an express denial of the Creator is not in line with the tempo of Buddhist thought. It is only likely to bog down the pilgrim and delay his march towards the ultimate goal—*nirvana*. The very discussion of the question, irrelevant and futile as it may have appeared to the Buddha, is best ruled out.

Islam, on the other hand, turns from the creation to the Creator, from the chariot (to borrow an example from Buddhist philosophy) to the designer of it. This material universe is termed in the Qur'an as 'the sign of God.' The reflective contact with the visible prepares the mind for an intellectual vision of the Invisible (—Iqbal). It must be noted here that a *direct* attempt at the vision of the Invisible, discarding the progression from the visible, which is speculative philosophy, is thoroughly out of suits with Islam. It is from this particular viewpoint that Iqbal criticises the Greek philosophers who failed to establish the correct relationship between man, his thought, and nature.[10] The inductive method, which percolated to Europe through Muslim Spain and gave birth to the present-day science and civilisation, is essentially a product of the Islamic mind—the mind that was nurtured in the dictum: 'Meditate not on Allah but on the creation of Allah' (tradition of the Prophet). The important corollary—important for culture and civilisation—is that matter as such is no hindrance to moral development. Islam does not at all recognise the artificial division (a result of mere speculation) of the life of man into two compartments, material and spiritual. It is only by

keeping his moral consciousness alive in the midst of a full and active life abounding in pleasures (pleasures of the senses not excepting albeit within salutary limits) as well as sorrows that a Muslim earns his merit; renunciation is out of the question. We shall have occasion to amplify the point later on.

The instantaneous transition of the mind from the art to the artist manifests itself in so many interesting ways in the daily life of a Muslim. A wonderful object of beauty would only evoke the characteristic exclamation *Subhan Allah* (How glorious is Allah!). A modern belle, wont to receiving all sorts of improvised and frivolous compliments to *herself*, might even take it amiss. The Muslim, however, would not be found lacking in appreciation and respectful love of beauty. The only point is that he would not give himself up to any attraction of this world without remembering and giving due credit to the original Creator. This thought of the Supreme Creator bound up with a knowledge of His will—His commandments and His prohibited limits—significantly works as an effective guarantee for the achievement of that moral purpose which many other systems have in view when they tend to renunciation in varying degrees. For instance, it would only show a lack of true understanding if a Muslim enjoying his dinner without any ostensible self-denial is taken to be greedy, gluttonous, unrestrained or forgetful of a moral purpose in life by a Buddhist monk who takes his simple noon-day meal collected in a bowl from the neighbouring town. While the monk must be thinking it dust, then eating a bit, and saying with all: 'Earth to earth I commit,' the Muslim may as well be reminded of the Qur'anic verse: 'Is it you or WE (Allah) who caused the food to grow?' Though there is no formality about it, the Muslim may also end up with the prayer: 'All praise is due to Allah Who provided us with food and drink.' The essential humility —a cultural attitude, a mere quality of the mind—induced by taking food as a mere gift from the Creator is

there and would sufficiently check an over-weening sense of self-importance even in the highest and the richest.

Wealth. Let us also see how the self-same attitude works in other circumstances. It is a facile assumption that hardship and poverty promote the moral development of man. In fact, it all depends upon the cultural attitude which one must have *previously acquired* as to how to 'take' calamity and misfortune. It is a common experience to see people howling about, getting rowdy, hurling blasphemy and even turning mad because of some mishaps, failures, and disappointments. If a man remains calm and cool and bears hardships and privations with serenity of mind, it is only because he has *previously learned* and decided how to react in that way. For that cultural attitude he is indebted to his religion, philosophy, ideology or, let us say, to his own thinking and volition and not to the circumstances in which that attitude is manifested and practised. The common assumption involves the same fallacy as we had occasion to notice in the prescription of prayer for the attainment of faith (footnote 1.) Thus when a Muslim hears the news of the death of a near and dear one he would only say *Inna lillah* (We all belong to Allah). Crying and mourning, wearing the black, or even a dishevelled look is prohibited. In short, any sign of impatience is taken as a lapse from the memory of the Ultimate Source of good and evil. Thus, patience in distress and sobriety in plenty are only the two sides of one and the same coin; both of them stem from the same cultural attitude and both distress and plenty are equally capable of fostering that attitude. The reason why poverty is not sublimated in Islam (it is placed on a par with disease to human body, not to be courted or coveted but to be 'treated' with genuine efforts to save one's own self and the entire society from it) is that plenty and riches are turned into a still more severe test of 'affirmation.'[11] Far from taking proverty as an index

to piety, Islam inculcates that resigning to poverty is tantamount to loss of faith in the Sustainer of the universe and that 'the hand that bestows a gift is better than the one that receives it,' which only means that command of the material resources affords one a better opportunity of practising one's moral impulses of philanthropy and concern for the welfare of society. It is in recognition of the same that the *sadhus* of India, once they were upbraided by Mr. Nehru for their being a liability to the nation, decided quite recently to organise themselves into a society working for the success of the Second Five-Year Plan of the Government of India. The Press hailed the decision as a radical departure from the ideals of the past.[12] Well, however that may be, it is only hoped that it will help towards an understanding of the Islamic viewpoint in the same way as Gandhi's devotion to the programme of total prohibition helped in popularising a truly Islamic virtue in an anti-Islamic milieu. Thus, a Muslim is to be judged not so much by the amount of wealth that he earns through such means as are made lawful for him (regulations in this regard are not to be neglected at all) as by the use that he makes of it. The realisation is fast dawning upon the economists that Socialism is chiefly a matter of feeling; the schooling of impulses and the inculcation of a sense of moral obligation towards others form the corner-stone of it, though, of course, the super-structure of regulations governing the economic activity of man has also to be attended to with equal care.[13] Communism's approach was essentially wrong when it treated it merely as a problem of hard tangible statistics and mathematics. The reason why there is no class-hatred in Islam despite differences of wealth according to undeniable, ineffaceable, natural differences in capacity—physical, mental, and temperamental—is not that religion is an opiate but that religion does in actual practical life kill at its very source callousness in the case of those who have comparatively more and jealousy in the case of those who have comparatively less.

'Have-not's,' i.e. those who are deprived of a minimum standard of living, are unthinkable in Islamic society. A situation such as became the pre-occupation of Communist thinkers, viz. an industrial revolution in Europe foisting itself upon the corrupt bases of feudalism (it is very important to take account of that) with all the benign influences of religion (Christianity alone) relegated to the background of private life and Sunday services, is not necessarily ubiquitous or universal. There is no absolute materialistic or historical necessity about it and it is short-sighted (if not dishonest) and unjust to generalise from it. Now, let us not forget that for a Muslim all benevolence is symbolised in 'affirmation.'

Power. As with wealth so with power—political as well as military. Power is not renounced, rather the lack of power is denounced, but the use of power is strictly regulated. Those who would not give up foisting a broken idol here and there[14] on the Qur'an are best left alone to exhaust or foster their political disgruntlement in that way. But even when violence and also non-violent pressure (it is generally overlooked that a non-violent economic and social boycott can be as bad a means of pressure as a violent attack) are eschewed beyond the least shadow of doubt so far as the propagation of the faith is concerned, the institution and the spirit of *Jihad*, i.e. the emphasis on military preparedness and the clear duty not to shirk war and sacrifice of life, have to be explained. There is no mincing the words that Islam makes no pretensions to non-violence and has no faith in the succumbing of the lion to the ways of the lamb. But preparedness for military action does not mean war as a career in life; rather, in the absence of moral restraint on the part of others (and who can be assured of such a restraint on the part of *others* through *his own* peaceful intentions?), it is the only effective safeguard for minimising the chances of war. The point is how far it is right to judge a man's intentions—peaceful or otherwise—merely by his possession of a gun.

Is it not possible that he may possess the gun throughout a lifetime without having the inclination to use it against his neighbour? What, then, it may be asked, is the value of the gun? Well, the value of it for peace and security is too great to be overlooked. The possessor of the gun has no means to generate in his neighbour peaceful intentions corresponding to his own if the neighbour, for whatever reason, just chooses to throw off all moral restraint on his own part. In that case the gun would surely act as a deterrent to immoral use of force. The point would be amply borne out if only we were to imagine for a moment the disappearance of the police force in any society, eastern or western, civilised or uncivilised. In the international field peoples are to be viewed as individuals living without a police force. There are always those who misuse their power and strength, those who exercise their power and prestige for the good of mankind, those who have all sorts of evil thoughts to plague the world if only they acquired the necessary power, and those who are well intentioned but too weak to exercise a restraining influence on others. I am not unaware of the Utopias which expressly visualise a society without a police force, even without a state, as well as those which proclaim with hollow sincerity of purpose the amusing hope of an international police force. Suffice it to say that the totalitarian regime in Communist countries is the avowed precursor of the one[15] while the defunct League of Nations, 'a kept mistress of the aging British' (Iqbal), with its revised edition, the present UNO, a mere propaganda forum for the Big Powers, the god-father of the other. A third Utopia in which the world evinced sufficient interest, due to the spectacular part played by India in the context of the rivalries of the great powers, is that of the Gandhian brand of non-violence. But it was agreed at a symposium held in connection with the session of the All-India Philosophical Congress in the University of Ceylon (December 1954) that it has not yet been tried on the international plane, though some

asserted that it can be. It was also revealed that the best equipped Indian forces were flown into Kashmir with the knowledge and approval of Mr. Gandhi himself. Quick came the comment from another quarter of the assembly that it was difficult to see any difference between Mr. Gandhi and Thomas Hobbes. And if the present Government of India are the heirs and executors of Mr. Gandhi's philosophy, they are quite unable to conceal their anxiety for maintaining 'the balance of (military) power' in their region. Where, then, is non-violence *as a means vis-a-vis* violence? Of course, non-violence may be said to symbolise non-aggressive *intentions*, but that is not the point at issue. Similar is the mirage pursued by sponsors of the disarmament proposals. Supposing that all types of conventional weapons, not to speak of the atomic bombs (which are bound to become conventional in course of time), are totally banned, is there a guarantee that people will not fight with their fists simply because they have no guns? Why not then fix one's attention on the moral purposes that inspire a man rather than vilifying, and at the same time coveting, the means at his disposal? Islam does not eschew violence as a means, but makes it thoroughly subservient to consciousness of morality and justice.

This consciousness of morality and justice can be tested in many ways. First, there is the readiness to respond to any genuine gesture of good-will, non-aggression and co-existence on the part of others. 'Should they (the enemies),' says the Qur'an, 'be inclined to a truce (then you, O Muhammad) reciprocate the same' (viii. 61). Actually, there is a creditable record of the Muslims' fidelity to the covenants entered into with others; these were regarded as solemn pledges and not as tricks to lull the other side into complacency. Secondly, the laws of war in Islam are elaborate to a nicety so as to leave no room for mere indulgence in lust. This is not the place to go into details; suffice it to say that violence and destruction are strictly limited to the needs

of breaking the might of the enemy. Thirdly, the moment that limited purpose is achieved the Muslims have to assume all the obligations incidental to liquidating the unhappy legacy of war *without vengeance or scorn for the vanquished.* This humanity, supplanting the ferocity of war with a suddenness almost bewildering and unbelievable, is indeed a unique characteristic of the social and political organisation of the Muslims and it is no surprise that it is misunderstood and singled out for attack. The victorious Muslims' bold acceptance of responsibility to cater to all the needs and comforts *on a footing of equality with themselves* of the still dangerous and unreliable survivors (prisoners of war) and the dependants of the dead on the battlefield from the enemy side, is dubbed, for want of a better word in western vocabulary, as 'slavery.' The real nature of this most humane solution of an unhappy problem will be appreciated only when it is offered to those who have pined away in the concentration and the forced labour camps (there is not much difference inside the iron curtain and outside it) and to the youthful widows of the dead and the untraceable who in their thousands have to fend for themselves and their children through the most debasing means openly in the streets of the war-ravaged cities of Europe to-day. Similarly, the institution of polygamy in Islam is largely (though not exclusively, there being conceivable peace-time needs too[16]) connected with the needs of the situation arising out of war. The people who expect the flower of their youth to make the supreme sacrifice at call, and who at the same time are not prepared to tolerate under any circumstance any promiscuity in sex relationship, have to provide in a morally accepted and legally well-defined way for soial stability and happiness when the ratio of men falls so low as one to every three or more women as in Europe to-day. Both in war and in rehabilitation—particularly social rehabilitation in which sex is an important factor—after the war, it is the 'affirmation,' the sense of moral responsibility in plenty and pleasure, that distinguishes a

Muslim from the sensuous and the libertine. The one who fails to appreciate this aspect of mental culture may certainly be misled by the mere form.

Though the name of Christ[17] is frequently and quite rightly associated with the cult of non-violence, it is only the Buddhists who can point to some history of statecraft with dedication to the cult, about the practicability of which the Islamic idealogy is avowedly diffident. Only it has to be noted that Buddhism was fortunate enough in the conversion of established monarchies—monarchies which had already attained to the height of their extension, prestige and glory through violence, may be a revolting excess of violence. Such ripe fruits as an Asoka (or a Constantine) seldom fell into the lap of Islam. Having fought a long-drawn-out battle of self-preservation in its homeland against those who would simply kill Muhammad outright before his mission was completed, Islam emerged to face the two great imperial powers of the time, viz. Persia on the east and Rome on the west. Two peaceful messengers in tattered garments but, of course, with an air of the newly-won dignity were sent to each of the two courts. The one to Constantinople was killed by a satellite as soon as he crossed the border, while the other to Persia was returned with the Prophet's letter torn to pieces as the reply. Far from having discovered any secret weapon or piled up conventional armaments, the Muslims were yet deficient in all sorts of equipment, numbers and organisation. Any charge of intoxication with power cannot be laid at their door. Yet it was clear to them that if they wanted to survive they had to fight and fight against heavy odds too. Thereafter it continued to be a see-saw battle on the frontier with the Eastern Roman Empire for about seven centuries until the rise of the Ottoman Turks. Persia suffered defeat after defeat and though the second Caliph, 'Umar, would very much like to have a stabilised frontier with her, circumstances forced a pursuit of the retreating enemy right up to the frontier of India and the banks of the Oxus. It was

once late in the sultry afternoon of Islam that the Mongols who established themselves as heathen monarchs in the very lands of Islam ultimately adopted the religion of their victims. Buddhism was a close runner-up at the time and will bear witness that Islam played the game fair. But it was an instance so unique that bards and minstrels would not cease singing it to this day. Otherwise Islam only experienced malicious opposition and unmistakable ill-will from the monarchs and the organised governments with whom it came into contact. It must be remembered that wherever the grip of an organised government was not tight, Islam always made headway without any violence and easily won over large numbers of nomadic tribes from Central Asia and Africa, who infused new blood at every critical stage in the decadent Caliphate. A testimony to the above is the taunt sometimes hurled at Islam that it is the religion of the 'unlettered.'

It must also be added that the Muslims are expressly enjoined not to exercise any violence upon those who are either incapable of violence such as women and children, decrepits and the aged, or have renounced it such as votaries and monks even though they were in the enemy camp. Thus, it will be seen that Islam is not impervious to the nobility of non-violence; it is bound to appreciate it wherever it is found and in so far as it is found. Only it is not a mere subject for a beautiful essay or a topic for philosophical disputation; it is a matter of statecraft, of securing freedom, honour and, above all, justice in the mundane world. The current acrimonious controversy in the Buddhist educational institutions in Ceylon as to the propriety of cadeting and the teaching of zoology must have served to bring to the fore the practical issues involved.

II. Tauhid (Unity of God)

As we have seen, man simply could not escape the idea, the thought, the intuition, the consciousness of the

Creator; if it were not natural, revelation would be sheer imposture; if it were not rational, religion would be a mere dogma. But man soon found it as difficult to stop at it as to pursue it further. He at once began to complicate the simple and mystify the obvious, got enmeshed in troubles of his own making and missed the restfulness that lay within his grasp. The discovery and the consciousness of the Creator was anything but thrilling; man soon became inquisitive about it and in the excess of his curiosity forgot to take account of the limitations of his own constitution, his own faculties and powers. Thus, if there *was* a Creator why not see Him, get close to Him, unite with Him, lose one's self in Him? But how? Our senses can only perceive the material while the intellect can only *deduce* the abstract. Either the immaterial must be *in* some particular material object, preferably a human being (incarnation) or *in* the entire material universe (pantheism) or else, if He would not mix up with matter, man *must* have some additional faculty with which to *see* the immaterial (gnosticism). And then why not shed matter, mortify the flesh and be absorbed, at least for a few occasional moments of trance and ecstasy, into the immaterial, the primal spirit?

Similarly, as man attained the consciousness of the Creator, he also developed, through one and the same simple process of argument, an essentially correct notion of His attributes—such as eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, creation, sustenance, destruction, mercy, etc. But then he became embarrassed with 'hows.' God hears, of course. How? Must have 'ears' bigger than ours. God is mighty; must have hands more than two and longer than ours. He rules over kings; His abode and His throne must be the highest, on an Olympus if not over and above the skies. Not infrequently these very attributes were personified into demigods who were sometimes at peace and other times at war with each other. Also if one of these attributes were more congenial than others to a particular people, its personification was raised to the status of a partner

or co-sharer with God. Anyway, this 'how' was the genesis of what is known as anthropomorphism and mythology. This tendency proved so difficult to eradicate that many a holy scripture purporting to be against it was in course of time distorted beyond recognition through it. It is a historical fact that in the case of more than one religion pictures and statues were introduced several centuries after the death of their founders and sometimes the innovation established itself only after a long internal schism. Apostles and sages who would not deify anything were themselves deified. It is with this sincere feeling that Islam records its acknowledgment of the previous faiths and recognition of their founders while taking exception to the current version of those faiths.

Again, if there *is* an Almighty God, why not win Him over as an ally of one's own tribal instincts and racial and other prejudices (the idea of a Chosen People of God)? What prevents such an Almighty Lord ruling over such a vast kingdom of demonstrably unmanageable size from having ministers, chamberlains, dignitaries, agents and favourites (priestly hierarchy—Brahmanism), and from succumbing to intercession, pleading, flattery and craft? In a word, there is a persistent tendency in man to carry God in his pocket and turn Him into a tool of his own primitive instincts instead of orientating his inner life and outer behaviour so as to be the instrument of God's will. Thus, in the end man only debases 'affirmation' as a handy moral sanction for his erstwhile evil ways and prevents it from working out its revolutionary implications for the good and happiness of mankind as a whole.

Like many other items, Islam claims no originality for the idea of *one and only one* God. Scholars have described it as the most valuable contribution of the Semitic mind to world thought. And lately some Muslim scholars have avidly collected such quotations from the Upanishads as the following:

(*a*) 'God is without figure, epithet, definition or

description. He is without defect, not liable to annihilation, change, pain, or birth; we can only say that he who is the eternal being is God.'

(*b*) 'The vulgar look for their gods in water; men of more extended knowledge in celestial gods; the ignorant in wood, bricks and stones, but the learned men in the universal soul.'

The only distinction of Islam is that it has stringently and effectively safeguarded the pristine beauty and nobility of the idea against the tendencies mentioned above and swept away all the obstacles that hindered its becoming a potent revolutionary cultural force. The Islamic creed is as follows:

'In the whole range of the Islamic scriptures there is no such thing as fictitious representation of God in any shape or form. The Qur'an sets its face squarely against the worship of any emblematical representation of God or of divine powers. "Nothing can be likened unto Him" is the declaration of the Qur'an. It further declares: "His are the excellent qualities which human intellect can conceive," but they are not regarded as separate or distinct from the divine essence. They are co-existent and co-eternal with God. Consequently none of the attributes of Allah or His divine powers are worshipped in any shape or form as a separate entity. Even there is no such idea latent or apparent in the Qur'an or *ahadith* as that of the Christian Trinity or the Hindu Triad, consisting of the three aspects of God. The Islamic conception of Allah is *ahad*, i.e. one indivisible whole which admits of no parts; nor is there any doctrine which holds that His one part or aspect, as a distinct entity, does one thing, and His other part or aspect does a different thing. Whatever He does, He does as an entire intelligent being according to His high purpose.'[18]

This is all that man *can* know through his reason

working on nature. The merit of Islam is that it tells him sternly that this represents the limit of his knowledge and, therefore, also of belief (if there is to be no dogma). Islam takes up the irrevocable position that, having observed the working of God's design in nature, it is sheer moonshine and highly dangerous for the moral well-being of man to pursue any further queries in regard to Him. There is absolutely no way of *seeing* God *in* nature—no incarnation and no pantheism, which represent a going back on the 'negation.' Further, man cannot even see God in his imagination, the very definition being that He is opposed to all that we can imagine. Hence, there can be no representation, ideal or otherwise, of Him. Muhammad was almost obsessed with the fear lest he should be deified. He lost no opportunity of emphasising, through the Qur'an and otherwise, that he was a mere human being, a messenger who had nothing *of* the Deity *in* him. Hence, his relics or his physical body or any image thereof had no sanctity at all. Had these teachings and these instructions been enough, there would have been no need for those restrictions which have caused Islam to be regarded as an 'enemy of art.' But account had to be taken of the common failing in man and the artistic urge had to be restrained to the extent that it was commensurate with moral welfare. It is a fact that human representation was discountenanced in early Islam to the extent that many Muslims believe that there was a formal ban on it for all times. Some Muslims would assert that there was no formal ban, that the restriction was actually disregarded in the course of the onward march of Islamic civilisation, and that it has long become redundant inasmuch as Islam can no longer have any fear of distortion. Anyway, it betrays a very narrow conception of art to confine it to human representation. Arabesque, mosaic and calligraphy are as much outlets of the artistic urge in man as sculpture, though they are termed 'minor arts.' He must be a neurotic indeed who would say that the picture of a woman is

superior to the picture of a rose or of scenic beauty, equal artistic skill notwithstanding. And apart from anything else, it never behoves 'art for the sake of art' to be so scornful of moral considerations. Most of us, Muslims and non-Muslims, still look askance at nude models and protest at obscenities under the cover of art. Those who would give a free licence to art are still very few. Of course, there may be a difference of opinion as to a particular thing being morally healthy or otherwise.

Thus, Islam not only taught but also took effective precautions to see that God is not represented in any material form, that Muhammad is not deified or raised to any super-human level and that no reverence is shown to any material relics. Muhammad knew that, though he had taken all the precautions, there still remained one thing: there would be a grave for him when he is dead. And so he used to pray aloud: 'O God! guide my people aright so that they may not turn my grave into a place of worship.' Even the moderate practice of kissing the grave of the Prophet has been taken exception to in the present century. And here it must be noted that no precaution would have proved of any avail if it were not supplemented with an over-riding duty of each successive generation of Muslims to take stock of their beliefs and practices so as to eschew those accretions which were found incompatible with the spirit of Islam. A Muslim's primary loyalty is not to the past but to the original source of his culture which is ever fresh in every age. It is this harking back which is very often misunderstood as conservatism in the sense of blind and merely sentimental, not rational and critical, allegiance to the past. It will, however, be seen that the mentality of a Muslim is just the opposite of a diehard no-changer. He conserves, if anything, the spirit of change—conscious, intelligent change according to his own norms and values. It is only an indication of the problem before Islam that, despite all its anxiety on the point, bits of the hair (easiest to forge) of the Prophet are on show in

many centres of Muslim population.

The Qur'an escaped anthropomorphism by a hair-breadth. The danger was inherent in the fact that even Islam could not dispense with phrases and imageries peculiar to this material world for the purpose of conveying to the human mind (embedded in the experiences of the senses as it is) such abstract ideas as the majesty of God and His other attributes and dispensations. The value of these phrases and imageries is no more and no less than that of our own use in our daily language of such expressions as 'sitting on the fence,' 'hitting below the belt' and so on. I remember an Arab fellow-traveller in a Constellation aircraft telling me in the old Arabic idiom that he would 'lay down his saddle' at the next airport. Still the tendency to anthropomorphism did appear in all its stubborn frenzy causing not a few riots and it is really fortunate that Islam came out unscathed from it. To-day not even the most ignorant Muslim will be found to have any tinge of it. It is well understood that there can be no 'how' in regard to any of the attributes of God.

But if it proved difficult to clothe God with matter, was it not easier for man to shed his own material garb and *see* and *meet* the immaterial on the immaterial (spiritual) plane? The early Muslims were busy men of action and simply had no time for any chimerical pursuit. The Prophet of Islam might have thought that he sufficiently banged the door against any such tendency by disavowing 'monasticism,' the necessary arena for spiritual acrobatics.[19] Yet a conglomeration of Christianity, Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, with some elements of Indian philosophy and a few forms of Buddhist organisation of the *Sangh*,[20] entered surreptitiously, donned the garb of Islam ingeniously and meticulously, established itself *de facto* in the teeth of protests, and then through a negotiated treaty had its rights acknowledged *de jure*. And then 'in the teeth of the Qur'an, Tradition, rationalism and orthodox theology (which regarded the invocation of saints as

trespassing into polytheism by derogating from the worship of God alone) the worship of saints crept into the Islamic fold and eventually swept everything before it' (Gibb). Nevertheless throughout there has been a succession of authoritative scholars and leaders in the various Islamic lands who have devoted themselves to the onerous task of reform in this direction. The most fruitful of them was the Wahhabi movement, which unfortunately petered out because of its misuse for political aggrandisement.

Unity of Mankind

We come to the most glorious and most enchanting feature of the Islamic culture when we proceed to examine how *Tauhid* has been turned into the most powerful instrument ever known to man for evolving a true world outlook. Again, we have to note that there is no novelty about the idea itself; the merit of Islam lies only in its scrupulous altruism, in the ruthlessly logical and unfaltering way in which it executes and translates the idea into actual practical life. Christianity had it in the 'Fatherhood of God,' yet it is a real misfortune for all that in contemporary West Africa Islam be known as the religion of the 'Black' and Christianity as the religion of the 'White.'[21] In the words of Iqbal, '"And We have created you all from *one* breath of life," says the Qur'an. But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement, and depends for its growth on a people's entry into the main current of world events. This opportunity was brought to Islam by the rapid development of a vast empire. No doubt Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to mankind; but Christian Rome did not rise to the full apprehension of the idea of humanity as a single organism. As Flint rightly says, "No Christian writer and still less, of course, any other in the Roman Empire, can be credited with having had more than a general and abstract conception of human unity." And since the days

of Rome the idea does not seem to have gained much in depth and rootage in Europe. On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism, with its emphasis on what is called national characteristics, has tended rather to kill the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. It was quite otherwise with Islam. Here the idea was neither a concept of philosophy nor a dream of poetry. As a social movement the aim of Islam was to make the idea a living factor in the Muslim's daily life, and thus silently and imperceptibly to carry it towards fuller fruition.'[22]

Let us fall back once again upon the argument from nature, which is the mainstay of Islam throughout:

> 'The main postulate of science is the unity of nature, a unity indirectly confirmed by the whole development of knowledge. It is clear enough that if there were no unity in nature, if the universe were not a cosmos but a chaos, if there were no regularities, no laws, but only an erratic succession of miracles, there would be no occasion for scientific research, no possibility of scientific progress' (G. Sarton).

Just as with the old Brahmans the idea of God was a mere vague divination (the pre-Islamic Arabs also had some such notion) which they would not 'realise' to the extent of cancelling the previous out-moded experiences (idol-worship) or would not allow to influence their narrow primitive culture (mental outlook reflected in an exclusive undemocratic society), similarly the present age presents the sorry spectacle of a retrogressive culture in inverse ratio to progressive civilisation. Unfortunately, the modern man would not take the lessons of science to heart; he would not allow, we may say, the philosophy of science to influence his world-view; rather he would prostitute science into a means of aggrandising his selfish interests, tribal instincts, racial prejudices and, in short, the whole outlook of 'ignorance' (in Islamic terminology).

According to the historian of science, the unity of nature mentioned above is really a triumvirate:

(1) Nature is one.
(2) Science is one.
(3) *Mankind is one.*

Only a little introspection will convince anyone that the triumvirate is quite innocent of imperialism, colonialism, racialism, colour distinction, economic exploitation class-hatred, nationalism, regionalism, the barriers to the free movement of human beings, labour, capital, professional and technological skill, and a score of similar maladies of the present-day world. While science would conquer space and contract the globe, our prides and prejudices, mutual fears and suspicions (and not the variety of dress, of language, etc.) would tear mankind asunder. Islam concludes the unity of God from the unity of nature: 'If there were gods more than one, the earth and the heavens would come to naught' (Qur'an). And then from the unity of God it comes to the unity of mankind in such a way as to add moral force to a scientific fact. The earnestness, the sincerity, and the astounding practical success of Islam in 'deracialisation of mankind without and perfect equality within' is due to the same additional moral force[23] which provides the only safeguard against '*useless knowledge*'—that lag between sympathies, attitudes, feelings and impulses on the one hand, and mere factual (the fashionable 'secular') knowledge on the other, which lurks everywhere and in every age, and which the Prophet of Islam prayed to save himself and his followers from. The new tendencies in the sphere of education since the end of World War II only point to a dim and timid realisation of the danger. It is very little appreciated that missionary effort was seldom a feature of the Islamic governments or even non-official public life. Whole-time missionaries and professional preachers living on charity among the Muslims to-day are just imitations of the West; in the good old days a

Muslim radiated his religion (which in Islam has always been synonymous with culture) through his normal every-day contacts with others.[24]

The point is that, according to the Islamic view, all knowledge ('religious' as well as 'secular') is to be *lived*, not to be stored in books and retailed by preachers and schoolmasters in polemical disputations or academic discourses. What a tremendous difference it would make if we *lived* science not only in the use of its inventions but also in a corresponding widening of our sympathies towards mankind! What a pity that the pride of the modern man in the discovery of the atomic energy is marred by a feeling of horror as if he had only sown the dragon's teeth! The horror only signifies a sense of moral bankruptcy, which is further underlined by the fact that he can only think of surrendering his weapons to an international agency, and not of surrendering himself to a compelling, omnipotent, omnipresent source of morality and justice. Islam insists on a complete self-surrender of the 'fingers' that press the trigger and not of the trigger.

Ukhuwwat:'Brotherhood.' Deracialisation is well known as the hall-mark of the Islamic civilisation. It is best to remind ourselves that this deracialisation would not have been possible without the practice of complete equality within the community. The manifestations of this equality—genuine heart-felt equality and not that artificial framework equality which is the dope of Communism—are a legion. I would only point out in passing that even some forms of official snobbery which have accumulated in the traditions of western bureaucratic administrations—administrations, ironically enough, dedicated to promoting the growth of democratic institutions—are revolting to the 'religious conscience' of a Muslim. The real reason why the superior civil services became an object of hatred and contumely long before the formulation of nationalism was the same: not that they executed the policies of imperialism

but that they were inured to any moral compunctions in looking down upon 'inferiors' in daily contacts. In India, the Muslims were the first to feel it or, we may say, they felt it more keenly than others, and Urdu literature, more than that of any other language, is replete with caricatures of the social behaviour (as distinguished from political and administrative acts) of the 'black Sahibs' (the term for high officials). The poignancy of the feeling on the point can be measured by the fact that 'bowing' to any fellow human being is forbidden in Islam,[25] that posture being reserved for the expression of man's relationship to Allah. It has struck many a western observer of Islamic society that even the peon betrays no servility to his master; the high and the low stand erect and look each other in the eyes. According to Lawrence, it was a rude shock for the Arabs to observe for the first time the kind of relationship that prevailed between the officers and men of the Anglo-Indian army.

Democracy. Also the reason why monarchy in Islam did not rouse the people to that high pitch which was expected, in view of the significant fact that Islamic history, unlike in the West, started with republicanism, was that monarchy was tempered with social democracy. It is wrong to explain the phenomenon, which has not failed to impress the students of Islamic history, by fatalism. Whatever a Muslim's fatalism, it relates only to the past, it just helps him to give up crying over spilt milk and to fix his gaze all the more intently on the future.[26] Social democracy in Islam has always been exceptionally high. The marriage of a king with a commoner, for example, never gave rise to any problem at all; marriages of princesses with erstwhile 'slaves' were a common feature. And it is quite understandable that this egalitarian spirit should take the sting out of monarchy. Unfortunately, it cannot be claimed in the same way that the spirit of political democracy survived for a long time, but the few glorious exceptions here and

there prove that there is no essential relationship between the spirit of democracy and the fashionable parliamentary system of government of to-day. Rather it is being slowly realised that 'the tendency in popular government for each representative to press the real or supposed interests of his special constituents is the greatest evil of democracy. It has been experienced to the full in tariff legislation. But it appears in many directions, in things good as well as in things doubtful—in education, harbour improvements, the postal service, public control of railways and other industries.'[27] It is this same tendency which has reduced every international machinery to a mockery. Elected representatives (representatives of the constituents exclusively) are, by the very methods of their election, incapacitated from adopting a truly altruistic and broad universal outlook. Each and every Muslim is, on the other hand, enjoined to work unitedly for the interests and the welfare of the whole of the community and always to take an over-all view under the guidance of a divine law. Thus it is enough for the contentment of a Muslim public that those in authority should strive to rule with a religious conscience. Many independent observers would agree that the general level of thought among the Muslims has only suffered a downward trend to parochialism since the infiltration of western ideas of government.

It will be appreciated that for a Muslim (an ordinary Muslim, not a philosopher) the equation One God = One World is a reality which he *lives* in his social, political as well as economic contacts, not only with the Muslim but also with the non-Muslim world. It is obvious that the democracy resulting from it is not limited or circumscribed by any man-made (in most cases, arbitrary) territorial line. As compared with it, the western conception of democracy as it is to-day is exposed by Professor Toynbee thus:

'Why is it that democracy . . . has had an aggravating influence on the evil of war? The answer

is to be found in the fact that, before colliding with the institution of war, democracy collided with the institution of parochial (or local) sovereignty; and the importation of the new driving forces of democracy and industrialism into the old machine of the parochial state has generated the twin enormities of political and economic nationalism. It is in this gross derivative form, in which the etherial spirit of democracy has emerged from its passage through an alien medium, that democracy has put its drive into war instead of working against it.'[28]

'The general state of economic equilibrium at low tension on a minute scale was violently disturbed by the advent of industrialism; for industrialism, like democracy, is intrinsically cosmopolitan in its operations. If the real essence of democracy is, as the French Revolution delusively proclaimed, a spirit of fraternity, the essential requirement of industrialism, if it is to achieve its full potentiality, is world-wide co-operation .... Finding the world divided into small economic units, industrialism set to work, a hundred and fifty years ago, to re-shape the economic structure of the world in two ways, both leading in the direction of world unity. It sought to make the economic units fewer and bigger, and also to lower the barriers between them.

'If we glance at the history of these efforts we shall find that there was a turning-point in it round about the sixties and seventies of the last century. Down to that date industrialism was assisted by democracy in its efforts to diminish the number of economic units and to lower the barriers between them. After that date both industrialism and democracy reversed their policies and worked in the opposite direction.'[29]

It is this democracy plus industrialism *in collision with* nationalism which is the ruling passion of all the Asian peoples who find themselves constrained to despise and imitate the West at one and the same time. The Islamic culture is conspicuously free from this

inherent contradiction. Nationalism, though much in evidence everywhere among the Muslims, has not yet supplanted Islam as a rival force. It is in fact the most important point of tension in the Muslim mind as a result of the impact of the West. We have already seen that Islam is far from prescribing a steam-rollered uniformity. All that happens under the Islamic outlook is that the emphasis, the gravity of thought and feeling, shifts from the so-called national characteristics to the human elements, from splinter separatism to the consciousness of the unity of mankind. It is also a fact that many differences do disappear in the course of free commingling without any reservation, which such an outlook necessarily fosters. Ultimately, democracy and industrialism are propelled in the right direction of world unity through making the existing units bigger and fewer, and lowering the barriers between them.

Rabbul 'Alamin: 'Lord and sustainer of all the worlds.' Islam categorically warns its own followers that they are not the Chosen People of God. The Qur'an designates them only as volunteers in the cause of righteousness. Islam is not a patrimony; even the son of a Muslim has to attain to it through his own individual thinking. A convert of to-day has equal rights and privileges with the one who is descended from a long line of Muslim ancestors. No group or nation has a prior claim to Islam nor any privilege, social or political, in the community. All are equally liable to incur the displeasure of Allah and suffer the natural consequences in this world of any deviation from divine guidance. There is no saviour even in the world hereafter. Allah is not the God of the Muslims alone; He is the sustainer of the entire universe in which both the Muslims and the non-Muslims have an equal span of life. It is not only a good pious belief; it has active cultural implications too. It is this belief which inoculates a Muslim against any jealousy of the economic prosperity of his non-Muslim neighbour. Islam never holds before its followers the

bait of pestilence, poverty and hunger for the non-Muslims. Allah would not exercise His authority over the earth to prevent it from yielding to a non-Muslim agriculturist the fruits of his labour. Similarly, if a non-Muslim business man thrives in the midst of the Muslims, it is just his due. Hence, Islam allows the fullest scope for partnership between Muslims and non-Muslims in the economic field; excepting a few stipulations in regard to meat and some other commodities, there are practically no restrictions on commercial exchange either within the lands of Islam or outside. That is why it never occurred to any Muslim government to squeeze out the non-Muslims from any particular field of economic activity through a calculated plan and deliberate policy. Rather all the evidence points to the contrary. In the glorious days of Baghdad, business accountancy was the monopoly of the Indians whereas 'in those lucrative occupations such as banking, large commercial ventures, linen trade, land ownership and medical profession, the Christians and the Jews were thickly represented and firmly established' (Adam Mez). Even to-day the commercial and economic life of the Middle East is dominated by non-Muslims who, although they chose to be the protege of the modern imperialists, really owe the establishment of their position to the ungrudging hospitality of medieval Islam. Again, let us take the case of India where the centres of Muslim population, nay, the seats of their political power and military cantonments, have throughout been dominated by Hindu magnates (who, in most cases, conduct their business in shops belonging to, and built under the terraces of, the mosques) as well as petty sweetmeat sellers and street hawkers. It is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that in many respects it was only a one-way traffic, the Hindus, on their part, being restricted by their belief in the impurity of the touch of a Muslim. Seldom was there any attempt at restricting the ownership of property, far less segregating the Muslims from non-Muslims. No student of history

can ignore contrasting it with, for instance, the policy of the French in North Africa. It was thus proved in actual practice before it was preached as a precept that the believers in *Tauhid* regarded a non-Muslim to be as much entitled to material riches as a Muslim. If the Muslims here and there have in recent times betrayed an attitude to the contrary, the credit or discredit must go to the 'awakening' brought about by westernisation.

Another important offshoot of the same is that the Muslims, wherever they went, only patronised local arts and crafts and enriched them with the developments of the outer world which they, as members of a far-flung commonwealth, carried with them. The reason why the Muslim traders endeared themselves to the non-Muslim rulers and the public of the South Indian coast, which was amply demonstrated in the wars of Zamorin, and why these Muslim traders never felt the need for any backing of arms to their peaceful pursuit, was one and the same: they never thought of impoverishing those whom they dealt with, their dealings being characterised by an unselfish recognition of the legitimacy of gain to all, irrespective of religion or nationality, for industry and skill. A comparison with the methods of the Portuguese, the Dutch and, last but not the least, the East India Company would amply bear out the difference.

Taqwa: 'Piety.' In Islam there is no intermediary between man and God. 'Allah is nearer to every man than the jugular vein in his neck' (Qur'an). All that one has to do is to be conscious of Him; one can do so either by one's self or not at all. This consciousness of Allah is termed *taqwa* which is the only standard of merit and pre-eminence. It is strictly personal and individual. 'Each one is to bear his own burden' (Qur'an). The *Imam*, who leads the prayer, is not 'ordained,' there is no 'holiness' about him; he is just one of the congregation who is chosen to lead (and not to minister) by virtue of his high *taqwa*, his knowledge and

character. The position can only be fully understood when it is realised that Islam does not at all visualise a division of society into clergy and laity. There is only one uniform standard of piety for all according to uniformity of human nature; what is expected of an average man is not extraordinary piety but avoidance of sin. Celibacy is not expected of all, hence it is *no merit*; chastity (indulgence in sexual pleasure only within specified limits) is practicable for all and that is a *merit*. If all men devoted themselves all the time to prayer, all activity on earth will come to a standstill; therefore, not even one man is to be encouraged to do so, and the one who does so is to be admonished and pulled up rather than respected and honoured. Thus, there being no unequal race for piety, it is impossible for anyone in Islamic society to wrap himself up in an aura of awe; no one is capable of giving moral refuge or blessing to another; it is only the sinner who can absolve himself of sin through *tauba*, i.e. sincere repentance of his own heart. This simple and direct approach has largely remained unimpaired except for such deviations as, for example, saint-worship.

III. Islam

We now come to the actual basis of morality. The entire material universe is bound up with an inexorable law of nature. No one has the power to violate or tamper with that law; the results are immediate and palpable like the burning of a finger in fire. Is there no such law governing the conduct of man towards man? Obviously there is, but with the distinction that man has the freedom of choice to conform or not to conform to it; hence the eternal conflict between good and evil. Of all the creation, man has the privilege of possessing the faculty of thought and reasoning. It is this faculty which helps him discover the laws of nature and gain mastery over it and discover the laws of morality and gain mastery over himself. Thus the moral law is only a

counterpart of the natural law; both are equally understandable, verifiable and reasonable. There is only one difficulty so far as the discovery of the moral law is concerned: 'the tyranny of the *here* and *now*' (Bertrand Russell). It was easier for science, concerned as it was with the objective, the non-ego, to escape from 'this geographical and chronological prison' than for the philosophical and ethical thought of man. We require for purposes of morality and ethics not only impersonal thought but also impersonal feeling, the latter of which is rarer than the former. The 'ego-centric character of our desire' circumscribes our sympathies and interferes with our ethics.

This is the difficulty which has in course of time manifested itself in all man-made laws and institutions and it cannot yet be predicted with any confidence that man will ever be able to get over it in the near or the distant future. How many times in modern history has man boasted of the charters of freedom, equality, fraternity and justice only to discover (and acknowledge albeit with a bad grace) within the short span of one generation that these universal values are as elusive as ever? It is precisely with a view to helping man, the intellect of man, in this baffling task that God, by an act of additional grace, 'reveals' through chosen *human beings* (prophets) the moral law (and not scientific theories which some foolish friends of religion and science search for in the revelation) to mankind. Thus, revelation is only a torch-light which helps reason to read the sign-post at the crossroads of good and evil. It does not dispense with, or curb, reason in any way; it does not impose anything on it; it only sets its own general direction. According to Islam, the test of revelation is not in a fire-eating performance (miracle); the test of the pudding lies in the eating. The Qur'an is the proof of Muhammad's prophethood and not *vice versa*: read the book, listen to the book, think over the book, and if you find it through your commonsense to be the embodiment of universal values—a simple, practical

and obviously beneficial code of life, bearing the stamp of an impersonal thought and impersonal feeling —then believe in it and act upon it. That is ISLAM, i.e. surrender to the will of God.

It will be seen from the above that a Muslim follows no isolated precepts or a bundle of *do's* and *don't's*; he follows a complete system of moral law as universal and all-pervading as the natural law covering the entire gamut, not excluding even the most trivial details of his life. It is for this reason that Islam does not attempt to enumerate and exhaust the forms of behaviour; it only gives to its followers general attitudes of mind—'culture' in the real sense of the word—which determine the reactions to all the circumstances of life. The Muslims have always to rely on, and exercise, their intellect and go on deducing *ad infinitum* from the general principles. This process is known as *Ijtihad.* The position of a Maulvi or Mulla in Islamic society is that of a jurisconsult, not that of a priest. Without *Ijtihad* the Muslims would look in vain for ready-made solutions to meet the ever-growing complexities of life-patterns. This naturally allows for a great variety of forms provided only that the spirit is preserved intact.

And it is here that we can understand the true significance of the term *'ibada* or worship in Islam. The Qur'an calls the attention of man to the example of nature which 'worships' Allah, i.e. obeys unquestioningly the laws laid down by Him. The implication is that man 'worships' only when he is conscious of carrying out the will of God in actual life. In the words of the Prophet, the coquetry of a Muslim in his bed chamber is an act of worship. It is only the consciousness of a noble purpose in the company of a woman and in procreation that distinguishes a pious from a profane act, sensual pleasure notwithstanding. Thus the key-note of Islam is to do away with the general conception by which worshipful acts are studiously separated from actual mundane life, and piety is measured in terms of aloofness. There are a few simple

forms of prayer prescribed in Islam, but they do not constitute real worship; they are just means of inducing those attitudes of mind which turn all life into worship. The Muslims are warned frequently that prayers are no passport to paradise; there shall be a scroll of the acts and deeds committed and omitted in life which shall be sorted out into good and evil, and then weighed in the scales.

The above may perhaps help in appreciating why a Muslim finds it so hard to meet the demand of modernism for splitting up his personality into private and public, social and political, personal and official, religious and civic, communal, national and international. Like his body which is subject to one single universal law of nature wherever he may be, the mind of a Muslim is also governed by a single universal, though optional, law of morality not only in the mosque and the home but also in the business house, the secretariat and the town hall. He would not don the scientific attitude only so long as he is inside a laboratory, nor would he cast off his social democracy before entering an office or disembarking on the shores of a crown colony. Western outlook, the result of a split between the Pope and the Caesar, demands of the Muslims that they set aside their Islam in certain important fields of activity. This is the most crucial problem before the Islamic world to-day and the Muslims continue to be in two, if not more, minds about it. It is certain that no section of the Muslims desires to live in isolation nor does any section relish the thought of injustice to others. Only there is one section which has despaired of the good-will and co-operation of the non-Islamic world on any terms short of the relegation of Islam to the privacy of the homes; the forces operating upon the thought of this section are external, not internal. The other section is still hopeful of convincing the outside world of tolerance, equality before law and social and economic justice *in Islam* through actual practice. The issue can only be resolved both for the

Islamic and the non-Islamic world if the latter section has an uninterrupted quarter of a century to prove its good faith. In the meantime, all that can be urged is that, on the testimony of Professor Toynbee, Islam is one noteworthy case in which religious tolerance was enjoined by a prophet upon his followers on the high ground that 'the persecution of a "wrong religion by a *soi-disant* right religion" is of its very nature a contradiction in terms, since by indulging in persecution, the "right" religion puts itself in the wrong and denies its own credentials.' Islam visualised from the very beginning the existence of non-Muslims as non-Muslims within its own political framework and has, therefore, put a charter of their rights upon its own Statute Book. As for the religious toleration upon which western Christianity entered in the second half of the seventeenth century, it had its origins in a 'cynical mood. It can be called religious toleration only in the sense that it was a toleration of religions; if we look to its motives it should rather be styled *irreligious toleration*.'[30]

NOTES

1. A young westerner, whose awakened intellect had just started on a quest, had the following argument with a Christian missionary:

'Yes,' said Father Felix, 'I know; the lack of faith, or rather the inability to believe, is the central illness of our time. You, like so many others, are living in an illusion which is thousands of years old: the illusion that intellect alone can give a direction to man's striving. But the intellect cannot reach spiritual knowledge by itself because it is too much absorbed in the achievement of material goals: it is faith, and faith alone, that can release us from such an absorption.'

'Faith . . . . ?' I asked. 'You again bring in this word. There is one thing I can't understand: you say it is impossible to attain through intellect alone to knowledge and to a righteous life; faith is needed, you say. I agree with you entirely. But how does one achieve faith if one has none? Is there a way to it—I mean, a way open to our will?'

'My dear friend—will is not enough. The way is opened by God's grace. But it is always opened to him who prays from the innermost of his heart for enlightenment.'

'To pray! But when one is able to do this, Father Felix, one already *has* faith. You choose to lead me around in a circle—for if a man prays, he must already be convinced of the existence of Him to whom he prays. How did he come to this conviction? Through his intellect? Would not this amount to admitting that faith can be found through the intellect? And apart from that, can "grace" mean anything to somebody who has never had an experience of this kind?'

The priest shrugged his shoulders, regretfully, it seemed to me: 'If one has not been able to experience God by himself, one should allow oneself to be guided by the experiences of others who have experienced Him . . . .'—M. Asad, *The Road to Mecca*, pp. 78-79.

2. 'Act only according to that maxim which you can at the same time will it to be a universal law.'—Kant.

3. Vide the following remarks of Professor Toynbee:

' "Spin and weave our Indian cotton with your Indian hands," he preaches. "Do not clothe yourselves with the products of western power-looms; and do not, I conjure you, seek to drive out these alien products by setting up on Indian soil new Indian power-looms on the western pattern." This message, which is Gandhi's real message, is not accepted by his countrymen. They revere him as a saint, but they only follow his guidance in so far as he resigns himself to leading them along the path of westernisation. And thus we see Gandhi today promoting a political movement with a western programme—the transformation of India into a sovereign independent parliamentary state—with all the western political apparatus of conferences, votes, platforms, newspapers and publicity. In this campaign the prophet's most effective, though not his most obtrusive, supporters are those very Indian industrialists who have done most to defeat the prophet's real mission, the men who have acclimatised the technique of industrialism in India itself.'—Somerville's Abridgment, p. 205.

One can easily understand some of the points in Mr. Gandhi's economic programme as a temporary expedient for the limited purpose of resisting the pressure of Lancashire. But to designate the abhorrence of science and technology as a 'philosophy of life' is to indulge in self-delusion. Paradoxically enough, this sense of pride in an indigenous philosophy symbolised in some anachronistic externals sufficiently offsets the slight felt in copying the West in politics, economics and industry and even acts as a convenient cover for following the maligned methods of imperialism. Thus we see that the 'real message' of Mr. Gandhi is still played up while independent India is busy producing one five-year plan

after another. The result is that we see the Congress Ministers dressed in hand-spun and hand-woven khadi wrangling about an increased quota of mill spindles for their respective provinces. We also hear Congress M.P.'s voicing fears in the Lok Sabha lest the industrial development of the neighbouring countries be a danger to India's position in the overseas markets! And there can be no greater irony than that even the production of cotton is being mechanised with tractors and other implements received through foreign technical aid and yet spinning with the *charkha* is done in the spirit of a sacred ritual on important occasions.

4. In Islam, as we shall see, the emphasis on empirical knowledge is just conducive to the affirmation of the Creator.

5. In view of the preponderance of saffron robes in Buddhist countries, it is best to remember that 'not even now has the Order become a priesthood; its members lay claim indeed, often with little ground, to superior wisdom and sanctity, but not to any spiritual powers; and its doors are always open, alike to those who wish to enter and to those who wish to leave it. In a system which acknowledged no Creator, the monks could never become the only efficient intercessors between man and his Maker. Their help was not required to avert by their prayers the anger of gods whose deity was temporary, and who had no power over men . . . .'—T.W. Rhys Davids.

6. *Introduction to the History of Science*, Vol. I, pp. 68-69.

7. It is noteworthy that the African negritos are said by the anthropologists to have an unexpectedly pure and lofty conception of the nature of God and of God's relation to man. Toynbee, *Civilisation on Trial*, p. 162.

8. But not unreal. A flower withers away in a day, but it is a flower, no more no less.

9. For Iqbal's exposition of the Islamic view on 'pain,' see *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 76 *et seq*. Also remarkable on the point is the Qur'anic verse: 'We have cast man in *hardship/strength*' (xc. 4). Undoubtedly, man has to undergo hardship in the exercise of strength (self-assertion), which, the following verse reminds, should be conditioned by subservience to Allah.

10. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 3 *et seq.*; 210 *et seq.*

11. Note the Qur'anic verse: 'And We try you by evil and good by way of probation' (xxi. 35).

12. I am afraid this trend of thought is going to prove irresistible in the present age. Vide K. Nesiah in *Journal of the National Education Society of Ceylon* for February 1956: 'In the pre-occupation with the ideal of poverty in this world and the urgency of seeking the next, material resources were not husbanded and there was little concern for technical advance.' Such real cultural changes are seldom acknowledged frankly, rather they are camouflaged under 'externals' such as mentioned at the beginning of this essay.

13. 'The main questions between property and socialism reduce themselves to questions as to men's character, motives, intelligence, ideals. They are questions, in so far, of psychology; in more familiar language, of human nature. They are not simple but highly complex; because human nature is highly complex. What is sometimes called "strictly economic" reasoning rests on the assumption of deliberate intelligent choice of the procedure that brings the most gain to the individual. It assumes hedonism in its simplest form . . . . They (men) may be restrained not only by the law but by a high moral sense.' F.W. Taussig, *Principles of Economics*, Vol. II, p. 523.

One must also remember the words of Iqbal: 'Modern atheistic socialism, which possesses all the fervour of a new religion, has a broader outlook; but having received its philosophical basis from the Hegelians of the left wing, it rises in revolt against the very source which could have given it strength and purpose.' *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 178.

14. It is true that idols were broken here and there in the course of military operations and, it must be acknowledged, somewhat in the same way as flags are pulled down in every international tension to-day. That is not to say that Islam sanctions desecration of places of worship; the point is that it was not done in the spirit of religious vendetta, the proof of which lies in the arts of peace. It will be seen that, as soon as military operations were over, temples were allowed to continue as temples without any interference with the practice of worship. Is it not remarkable that the ancient temple cities of India still retain their character as in the hoary past? They were not restored under the protection of the British; they were there throughout the centuries of uninterrupted, stable Muslim rule. Except for solitary symbolic mosques, a visitor to Benares or Muttra, for instance, would search in vain for any sign that they were so near the seat of Muslim power. Seldom did the state lay hand on property belonging to the temples, and deeds of confirmation and assignment on behalf of most of the Muslim rulers are extant. Still more worthy of appreciation is the fact that there was no planned and calculated attempt to alter the character of the population of these cities (or any other particular area for the matter of that) as is being done to-day in many parts of the world with grandiose secular pretensions.

A typical example illustrating the methods of the Muslims, by contrast, is that of Somnath. It was originally a Buddhist stronghold. I am quoting a contemporary Hindu scholar, Dr. M.L. Roy Chowdhury of the Department of Islamic History and Culture in the University of Calcutta: 'When Sankaracharya led a tirade against Buddhism most successfully Somnath was turned into a centre of Siva worship' (*Calcutta Review*, Aug.-Sept., 1954). Thereafter Mahmud of Ghazna raided the place, damaged the temple, and retired. But soon the temple was allowed to be rebuilt and to continue as a temple in the usual way close by a Muslim population and under the very nose of successive Muslim governments. To-day or any day the damage done by Mahmud can easily be repaired by replacing the door leaves (original or faked) and renovating certain nooks and corners of the building.

It will also be observed that many of the cruel practices of self-mortification

(such as the Buddha denounced after personal experience) current among the Hindus were as repugnant to the religious conscience of the Muslims as to the humanity of the British, who did not mind taking governmental action to ban them. The Muslims, however, hesitated to do so because the practices were indulged in the name of religion.

15. The evaporation of the state may be regarded as one of the mysteries of Communism.

16. 'Notwithstanding the spiritual fact of love that has entered human life in the course of man's development, the underlying *biological* reason for the sexual urge, is, in both sexes, procreation: and while a woman can, at one time, conceive a child from one man only and has to carry it for nine months before she is able to conceive another, man is so constituted that he may beget a child every time he embraces a woman. Thus, while nature would have been merely wasteful to produce a polygamous instinct in woman, man's undoubted polygamous inclination is, from Nature's point of view, biologically justified. It is, of course, obvious that the biological factor is only one—and by no means always the most important—of the aspects of love: none the less, it is a basic factor and, therefore, decisive in the social institution of marriage as such. With the wisdom that always takes human nature fully into account, Islamic Law undertakes no more than the safeguarding of the socio-biological function of marriage (which includes, of course, care for the progeny as well), allowing a man to marry more than one wife and not allowing a woman to have more than one husband at one time; while the spiritual problem of marriage, being imponderable and, therefore, outside the purview of law, is left to the discretion of the partners.'—M. Asad, *The Road to Mecca.*

17. 'His insistence on loving your enemies, returning good for evil and not laying up treasure on earth, are not isolated precepts but the very centre of his life and teaching. Yet this monastic other-worldly communism has become the professed religion of western nations whose entire structure is based on faith in force and the making of money.'

18. Wahed Husain, *Conception of Divinity in Islam and the Upanishads*, Calcutta, 1936.

19. 'In his (Muhammad's) message, *reason* was stressed as the only real way to faith. While the validity of mystical experience was not necessarily precluded in this approach, Islam was primarily an intellectual and not an emotional proposition. Although, naturally enough, it produced a strong emotional attachment in its followers, Muhammad's teaching did not accord to emotion as such any independent role in religious *perceptions*: for emotions, however profound, are far more liable to be swayed by subjective desires and fears than reason, with all its fallibility, could ever be.'—*The Road to Mecca.*

20. Ignaz Goldziher gives an analysis of these elements in *Vorlesungen uber den Islam.* The rosary in the hands of Muslims is the obtrusive sign of the borrowing from the Buddhists.

21. No wonder that 'in some areas where Christian [and Moslem missionaries are in competition Islam gains ten converts for every one who accepts the rival faith.'—*Life International* (August 1955).

22. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 133-134.

23. Toynbee is fully cognizant of it: 'Love of mankind has been a force in history but only when it was a by-product of an intense love of God.'

G. Sarton is also of the same view: 'However necessary, knowledge is never sufficient. If there is one lesson which history has taught us, it is the fundamental importance of will power, as much for nations as for individuals, and in every circumstance of life, great or small. Greek civilisation ended in failure not because of the lack of intelligence, but because of the lack of character, of morality. (Of course, I mean not only personal but public morality, not only the repression of self-indulgence, but also a sufficient subordination of individual ambitions to the common weal—the essence of fairplay and teamwork. The noblest ethical movement of antiquity, Stoicism, failed for a similar reason; it was individual, not social.)']

Iqbal sums up the point thus: . . . experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men, while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement.' *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 170.

24. Even the Sufis who made conversions (through persuasion, of course) a purpose were departing from the traditions of active normal life in early Islam. It was natural that their undue eagerness in this regard should end in compromising Islam itself.

To G. Sarton no other proof of the tolerance of the Muslims in India is required than the mere fact of a Muslim minority after more than eight centuries. But it raises another question: Why did this tolerance not produce the same results as it did in Persia, for instance? The answer is significant, namely, that the Muslims depended on free social contacts and in this regard the barriers set up by Brahmanism proved impenetrable.

25. None can derive such genuine pleasure as a Muslim from Mr. Nehru's exasperation at the people trying to 'touch his feet.'

26. ' . . . . On the other hand, one glance at the countless rebellions in Muslim lands will show that the believer's acquiescence had very definite and rather narrow limits. However often disappointed in its expectations, the

populace was ever ready to fight for a cause instead of patiently waiting for the preordained outcome.'—Von Grunebaum, *Islam*, p. 70.

27. F.W. Taussig, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 546.

28. *A Study of History*, p. 285.

29. Ibid., pp. 287-288.

30. Ibid., p. 300.

BASHIR AHMAD DAR

QUR'ANIC ETHICS

THIS book is an attempt at giving in modern terms the life-giving and life-enriching moral principles of the Holy Qur'an, which aims to instruct and guide people in their moral efforts towards a better, peaceful and harmonious life.

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